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Mary Zickefoose

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Date MAY 1, 1976

Mary Zickeroose
(Signature - Interviewee)
Helvetia, W. Va.
Address

Date MAY 1, 1976

John Hanner Jr.
(Signature - Witness)

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This conversation is with Mrs. Mary Zickefoose of Helvetia.. I've been a guest in her home during my stay. We're sitting in her kitchen now, and first I'll ask a couple of questions and then.... Mrs. Zickefoose has some.... some, uh, stories she was tellin' me yesterday that are very interesting.

J.H: Uh, Mrs. Zickefoose, where were you born?

M.Z: In Czar down here, about two and a half miles down.

J.H: And when were you born?

M.Z: April 8, 1906..

J.H: OK. Would you tell me some about, what was the girl's name that the hotel owner....

M.Z: Uh, Hubers. The uh.... that owned this...?

J.H: Yeah.

M.Z: It was Hubers.. Frank Huber and his wife's name was Hulda. And they had two girls, one Mary and Hulda. Hulda and Mary, it was; Hulda was the oldest. And then, they uh, they run the hotel here for quite a while back in the horse 'n buggy days, had quite a few people would stop; salesmen, a lot of salesmen would come in, y' know and they would stop there overnight and people came in I guess to re---, for a weekend or something.

J.H: The barn out here, they'd leave their horses in there?

M.Z: They'd leave their horses in the barn there; course they had some cows, too, they would uh, they used; kept in the barn.

J.H: Tell me a little somethin' about the black girl who they.... did they adopt her, sort of, after... she was abandoned or after her...

M.Z: Yes. Yes, uh, you want me to tell you about when she was over there?

J.H: Yeah, what was that man's name; who was that?

M.Z: I can't think what his name was that had her. He went over to Marlinton at a poor house and got her and she was, I don't know, probably about six years old, or something like that; and brought her home over here; instead of giving her a bed to sleep in he threw a pile of rags down on the floor an' it was her bed; and I guess they were pretty mean with her. He came in one night with a... raincoat, he'd been out in the rain; he said to her, he says 'are you cold, Dory?', an' he took off his ol' raincoat an' threw it over her there on the pile of rags, and then they had this out building there that was a wash house an' I guess maybe sort of a storage room; an' when they would leave, they didn't take her with her they would put her out in that wash house. Excuse me; and uh, she told me

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that they'd just put down a dish of food for her like they was gonna' feed a dog, an' said she was scared to death 'cause then she'd sit back and watch the rats come an' eat her food from the dish; an' I guess.... they set her... they had cows also an' up against the hill over there and they would send her after the cows, and then because she didn't go right directly to them, why, they would beat her. So when they left over there they came to Hubers up here at the, the inn, and wanted them to take her, so they took her an', yh, Mrs. Huber put her in a clean bed with nice white sheets. She said that after Mrs. Huber put her in the bed, she'd go back downstairs to work, that she'd (Dory) get out on the floor to sleep.

J.H: She'd never had a bed before, huh?

M.Z: No, she'd never had a bed to sleep in. I suppose at the poor house, though, they surely had a bed, I don' know.

J.H: About what age was she at that time? When she went with the Hubers?

M.Z: Well, I imagine around ten or twelve, maybe something like that.

J.H: Um hm.

M.Z: Then she said 'Mother'.... she always called Mrs. Huber 'mother', said Mother Huber would come back upstairs an' would put her back in the bed. They had quite a time with her to get her to sleep in the bed after being so used to sleeping on a pile of rags. And then, after she got to be about fifteen or sixteen, these people came back after her, wanted her to go with them. They were gonna' give her a nice home ~~xxxx~~ she said....

J.H: Were these, uh, these people some of her family?

M.Z: No, huh uh, they were somebody that came in, I don't know..... I can't think of their name, somehow, but uh, they weren't even related. So she said that she told 'em she was gonna' stay with Mother Huber, she wasn't goin' with 'em. But she went back in the house, an' they drove off, an' she could still them, goin' down through with their horse an' buggy.

J.H: Were they kinda' angry?

M.Z: I guess they didn't like it too well, she didn't say. She'd tell me a lot of things. She'd stay with us some, you know, when.... uh, one of them people would go to Florida, she'd come down and stay with us, and go back up when....

J.H: What was this girl's name?

M.Z: Dora. Dory Morely.

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J.H: Oh, yeah.

M.Z: Her right name was Morely but she always went by the name of Huber. Said she could remember when they came an' got her at the poorhouse, that she and her sister were standing by the table eating and these people came in, an' they took her and left her sister.

J.H: Um.

M.Z: She thought that her sister maybe had been taken to Parkersburg, I don't know, she didn't know for sure. I don't think she had ever saw her sister after that.

J.H: She lived in Helvetia until uh, then she was put in a resthome someplace?

M.Z: Yes, up at Elkins. She... they didn't know when her birthday was or exactly how old she was but they gave her a birthday in October. She was gettin' up in years when she died, in eighty I think. She's been pretty old when she passed away.

J.H: Now, uh, how about tellin' me somethin' about Kopro, the old..... fella' in town.

M.Z: Well he was an old man, he was a bachelor;.... queer old guy. He lived in a little shack up here, just across from the Hubers. The people would take him food, in because he wasn't, I guess able to cook for himself much; an' they'd take him food and then he would dry apples; an' when he'd go to visit somebody he would take dried apples, a little bag of dried apples to them, and they'd be wormy! And they'd have to throw them out. But the children were afraid of him when he' come to visit at our house, why we were very quiet, an'...

J.H: He was the boogy man, huh?

M.Z: Yeah, well, I guess he didn't like children. But he.. then he would pick the little rocks and pebbles out of the river, you know and make a wall out by the side of the river, the riverbed. And one time... (you want me to tell you about the trip to granddad's?)... one time my mother, before my mother and father were married he'd gone up to my grandfather's an' it was wet, and he got his feet wet, and they were cooking, and had uh, kettles on the cookstove, you know, preparing their meal; so he takes his shoes off an' he takes his socks off, an' he goes to lift the lid off the stove to wring the water out of his socks!

J.H: Huh! Right into the beans, huh?

M.Z: Oh, yeah, whatever they were cooking. Made grandfather mad! He stopped him an' give him a bawlin' out. 'Course the old fella' didn't like that very well. But uh....

J.H: Did he have any family?

M.Z: None that I know of around here. There was another family

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of Koprios up here but they were different; he was a much younger man, but I don't think they were even related.

J.H: Um hm.

M.Z: Then he finally... they finally put him in the uh, asylum down at Weston, he... I guess he always was sort of a strange guy, and then finally lost his mind or they thought he'd lost it enough anyway to... put him in there.

J.H: Hm. Was that years ago, when...?

M.Z: Yes, several years ago. Uh huh; I was... oh, I suppose in my early teens when they took him.... away.

J.H: What age were you when you operated the switchboard for the Helvetia Phone Company?

M.Z: Oh, thirteen, fourteen; thirteen, fourteen. I worked in there I got... we worked, from seven in the morning 'til twelve; then we had lunch an' went back to work at one, and worked 'til six, had supper, y'know, an' then we started again at seven an' worked 'til nine.

J.H: Twelve hours.

M.Z: Twelve hours--- twenty-five dollars a month! But it was fun, I enjoyed it.

J.H: Could you explain a little bit about the, the telephone system that operated in Helvetia until about.... when was it, about ten years ago that they changed over?

M.Z: Something like that, yeah. Well it was just a little.... system a little company that they had here, you could call into Rock Cave. And then they would connect us with the people in Buckhannon, and uh... wellthere used to be several on it; we could call back over into Hardridge and different places.

J.H: But it... what happened if you needed to make a long distance call?

M.Z: Well we had to call.... they had a Bell system in Pickens, an' we could call up there, and they would uh call the party that we wanted you know, then relay the message; an' then sometimes you'd just go to Pickens and then later they got a Bell system phone in down at, uh, Alexander; people would go down there then a lot to call long distance.

J.H: When you called long distance did you have to speak through the operator, relay the message, or could you talk directly?

M.Z: Well, not...not on the system we had here..

J.H: Uh huh..

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M.Z: They uh, well it was like when we would call to Pickens, y'know, the lady up there, well they had the Post Office, and she, we could tell her what we wanted and she would tell, or call through. They had the Bell phone. And then they would call through to the party we wanted and relay the message.

J.H: Uh huh.

M.Z: But after we, when we could go, y'know, they couldn't, connect this somehow with the uh, Bell system.... but uh...

J.H: Now everybody had... in the town, well they still have their own special ring don't they?

M.Z: Yes; well there's eight, eight on the party.... see, they're party lines, and there's eight on the line but two ring in together. There's one ring for one and then two for the other. Then there's nobody else's ring that rings in then, with us. The store and I ring in together; it's just one and two.

J.H: When everybody was on the same system was, there.... a particular, was there a special ring for, if everybody was supposed to get on the line?

M.Z: Yes---oh, what was that, I don't remember; if there was a fire or something out....hm, I can't remember what that ring was. But there were several on a line you know, and then you'd have different rings, like, well for our switchboard down here was a long an' a short; and then some of 'em had two longs an' a short; or two shorts an' two longs or two longs an' two shorts or a long an' a short an' a long an' a short an' a long an' a short; just kinda' reverse, you know; and then there'd be maybe twelve or so on a line, maybe not so many on another one; they all had, uh, on each line had a different ring but of course if they were different lines they could have the same ring.

J.H: Um hm. Is the...was that system as effective as the phone system now, more effective, or about the same?

M.Z: No, I don't think it was. Huh uh.

J.H: Was it more...wasn't as effective?

M.Z: No. This...this we have now is much better.

J.H: Then you...made the change about...about ten years. OK.

M.Z: Something like that, uh huh. I don't remember just when it was, but uh...it was better than no phone at all, of course. Got bawled out, if you didn't get your party, the party they wanted. I got several bawlin' outs when I was on the switchboard.

J.H: How long did you work on the switchboard?

M.Z: Well, I must a been there, oh, two and a half years, or

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three.

J.H: You worked all those long hours every week?

M.Z: Yeah. On Sunday, though, we had, just from seven to none in the morning and from four to six in the evening, so we had a little break.

J.H: Yeah. Did they have a...a relief operator on Sundays or did they just close down the switchboard, most of the time?

M.Z: Just closed it down, uh huh. Just closed it down.

J.H: Everybody just kinda' took things easy on Sunday.

M.Z: Uh huh. They knew that it would be closed, of course. And then, it was in a home, down here. And if there was, you know if somebody got sick they could ring emergency ring and these people would answer then. And uh, get their party, or at night, y'know after the closing hours if they needed help for something they could ring this emergency ring an' get help.

J.H: OK.

(end of recorded portion)
(interviewed by John Hennen)